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CIA May Have Inspired 'Cinque'

Did the Central Intelligence Agency unwittingly inspire the kidnaping of Patricia Hearst? This bizarre possibility is raised in a sworn statement by a convict who served time in a California prison with the heiress' captor, Donald (Cinque) DeFreeze, the violent "field marshal" of the Symbionese Liberation Army.

Admittedly, the convict, Clifford Jefferson, can hardly be considered a reliable witness. He's serving life for murder and for assaulting a fellow inmate. He is known as "Death Row Jeff." On the other hand, it's not clear what he would gain by fabricating a story.

Here is Jefferson's strange tale, contained in an affidavit for Hearst's first defense attorney, Vincent Hallinan:

In 1971 and 1972, Jefferson was confined with DeFreeze at a facility in Vacaville, Calif. "In the early part of 1971, DeFreeze stated to me that the CIA was conducting tests to try out certain drugs on inmates, and he had been in on it," states Jefferson's sworn testimony. He continued:

"These tests were on the third floor of the facility in B3: I went there and met two CIA men who were giving these tests. They gave me drugs, including mescaline, Quaalude and Artane. These drugs first made me terribly frightened, then other drugs were given to calm me down . . .

DeFreeze stated that he had gone through the same tests and also knew of stress tests that were given to prisoners, in which they were kept in solitary, harassed and annoyed until they would do anything asked of them to get out; then they were given these drugs and would become like robots.

"He [DeFreeze] said that when he got

out, he would get a revolutionary group to kidnap some rich person. They would hold that person tied up in a dark place, keep him frightened and in fear of his life, then give him mescaline and other drugs, and the person would become a robot and do anything he was asked to do—including killing others.

"He thought a good one to kidnap would be one of the Kennedys. Then the revolutionary group would get great publicity and could get the person to get them money."

DeFreeze left the Vacaville facility in late 1972. He and his cohorts kidnaped Hearst in 1974, and according to testimony at her trial, kept her bound and blindfolded in a closet for 54 days.

Jefferson, of course, has no way of knowing whether this treatment was used in tandem with LSD or other drugs, as Hallinan suspects, to transform the daughter of a millionaire into "Tania," the machine-gun-toting, bank-robbing revolutionary.

DeFreeze was killed in 1974 in a shootout with police in Los Angeles. But CIA files confirm that the agency did conduct drug experiments on Vacaville inmates as part of what was known as the MK-Ultra program.

This was designed to study the effects of stress and drugs on prisoners of war, to determine the point at which they would crack and become robot-like slaves, doing and saying anything they were ordered to.

Casting doubt on Jefferson's credibility, Vacaville Superintendent T. Lawrence Clanon told our associate Gary Cohn there is no evidence the CIA conducted any experiments at Vacaville after 1968—two years before DeFreeze entered the prison.

Furthermore, he said, DeFreeze could not have known of the CIA's involvement in the Vacaville experiments until August 1976, when it was disclosed. Thus, DeFreeze could not have told anyone that the CIA was conducting the tests, as Jefferson's affidavit says.

On the other hand, Clanon acknowledged that DeFreeze had volunteered for medical research in July 1970, shortly after he entered Vacaville. And a source familiar with the CIA's experiments at Vacaville said it is uncertain when the agency ended its testing there.

In their affidavits to the federal judge who presided at the Hearst trial, Hearst's lawyers described the symptoms they observed when they first interviewed her as consistent with those of a person having a nervous breakdown or under the influence of drugs.

Another affidavit, by a college friend of the heiress, described similar symptoms of emotional disorder that he and his wife observed during a jail visit.

A wild story, certainly, and perhaps nothing more than the product of an imaginative convict's mind. But stranger stories about the CIA, initially scoffed at as the ravings of science-fiction or spy-novel buffs, have turned out to be true.

Watch on Waste—In addition to their own monthly telephone bills, taxpayers also pick up the tab for the federal government's phone calls. In Washington, D.C., alone, phone calls by federal employees add up to \$7 million a month. Simple arithmetic reveals that Washington's bureaucrats chat on the phone to the tune of \$84 million a year.